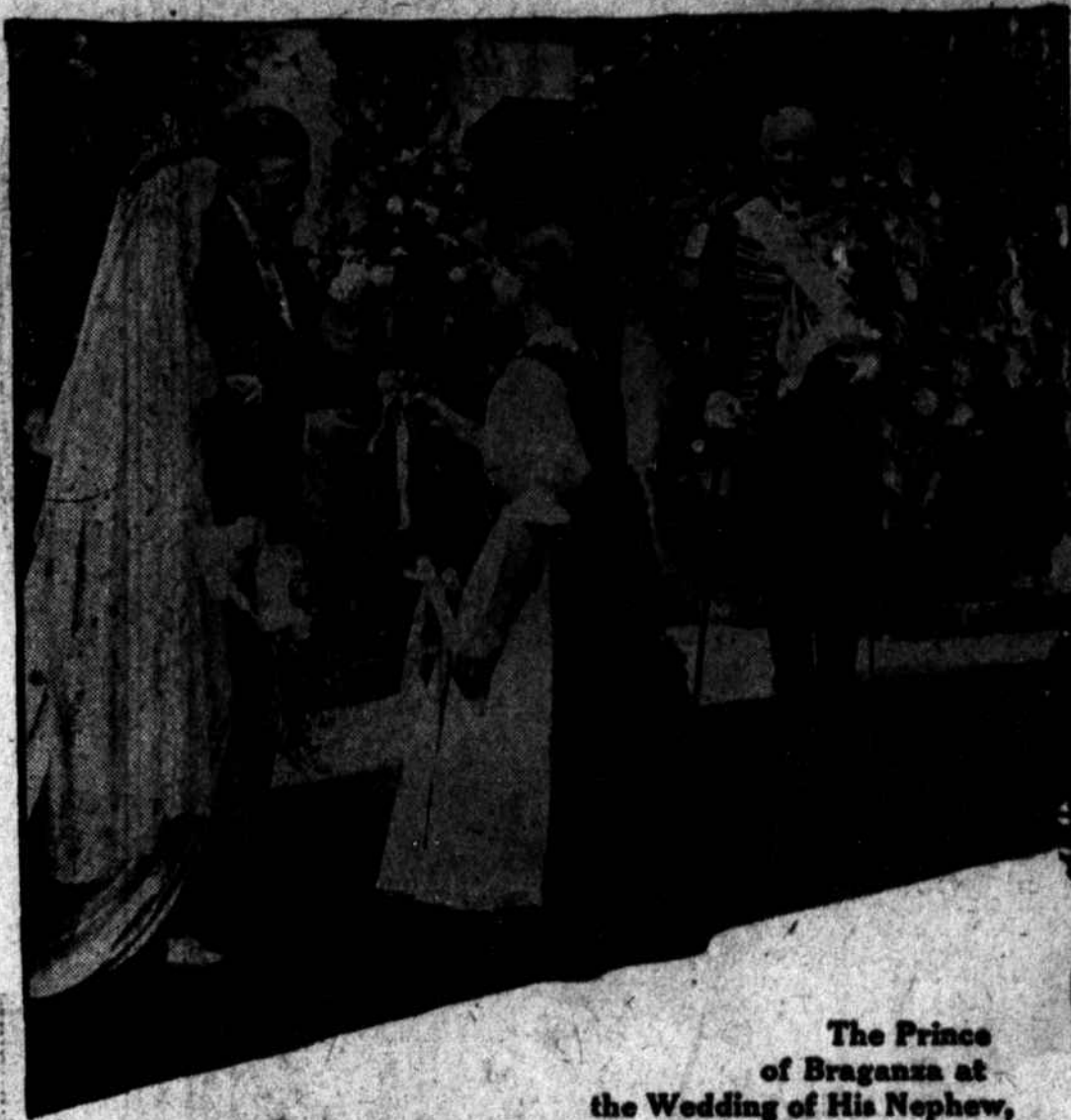


# Mrs. Van Valkenburg's Weird Tribute to Her Royal Last Husband

## Her Sombre Quest Through Europe to Find a Coffin Fit to Hold His Body, and the \$100,000 Half Ton and Crowned Sarcophagus That She Had Built at Last in America



**The Prince of Braganza at the Wedding of His Nephew, Manuel, the Ex-King of Portugal. The Prince is the Gaily Decorated Figure at the Right.**

THE mystery of why the American Duchess of Oporto, who was the much-married Mrs. Nevada Van Valkenburg, left London, came quietly to America, stayed a few weeks and as quietly departed, has at last been dispelled. The visit was a mystery because it is not usual for Mrs. Van Valkenburg, who, before she became a royal princess, was known as America's "Ten Million Dollar Widow," to appear in the country of her birth without giving out a number of diversified opinions about things in general. It now leaks out that the purpose of the American Princess's visit was an expensive and certainly weird tribute to the memory of her royal last husband, the uncle of ex-king Manuel of Portugal, a Prince of Braganza, and the next in succession to the Portuguese throne when the revolution kicked that throne into the discard. Exiled from his country and denied by hard-hearted republicans the honor due his birth, his widow determined that he should not be without them in death.

Crownless he had lived, but crowned he should lie—indeed! And he should have his place among his ancestors in the historic mausoleum of the Portuguese kings at Lisbon, where the departed royalties of the former kingdom lie in hermetically sealed coffins that date back a hundred years before America was discovered.

Furthermore, republic or no republic, her husband should have a funeral befitting his rank and commensurate with the gratitude she felt for lifting her from the comparative obscurity of an American "dollar princess" into the ranks of real royalty.

But how could all this ambitious programme be effected?

The Duchess of Oporto's life has been one that has trained her in the overcoming of obstacles. One of six sisters, and born in a little Western town of poor but eminently respectable parents, her first problem was how to get away from it. She married Lee Agnew, an inventor. They came East. The romance did not progress well and she divorced him. Her youthful beauty and charm had won the heart of William Hayes Chapman, many times a millionaire, and the day after her divorce was granted she married him. Chapman was then seventy-six years old. He only survived the marriage for a year and died, leaving her with a fortune of at least ten million dollars. She went abroad, and at thirty, endowed with riches and beauty, created a sensation; became, indeed, the rage in Paris and other European capitals, and had in her train many royal and noble suitors.

Then Philip Van Valkenburg, who was fifty-five and worth about twenty million dollars, paid court to her. He cut her out from among the titled swains and the two were wedded at the St. Regis Hotel in New York. But after a few months this romance also went wrong and Mrs. Van Valkenburg secured a divorce with a very substantial settlement.

Then, with more millions and her beauty unimpaired, she became the bride of ex-king Manuel's uncle, the Prince of Braganza and Duke of Oporto. The little Western girl, one of six sisters, was a royal highness and entitled to all that went with the rank, for her husband's royalty was as real as the dollars and beauty which had secured him.

Prince Braganza died in Italy in February, 1920, an exile.

After the Italian undertakers had done their work a strange scene might have been witnessed in the room where his remains lay. One would have seen his widow, tears streaming down her cheeks, taking careful measurement of his body. Then with the utmost care she would tape around the cold forehead and read off the inches to a secretary taking notes. Then she measured the head from the brows back. Minutely all the dimensions were taken, as carefully as a scientist would of a skull about whose capacity he was preparing a paper.

All his life, the Princess knew, her husband had longed to wear the crown of Portugal. She had never dared take these measurements while he was living. She never dared tell him what plans she had for him after he was dead. But now the time had come to put them into execution.

For months she traveled about the capitals of Europe seeking a coffin of enduring silver and bronze in which his body could rest. She found none that suited her. Europe has had to build so many caskets in recent years that all fancy touches have been eliminated. The Princess could not even get silversmiths to take her seriously when she tried to get them to make a special coffin for her.

So a few weeks ago she slipped quietly into the United States. There she discovered that a silver casket is not altogether unknown. For some years they have been made for sale to motion picture millionaires and others whose relatives wished to keep their bodies on view. At the greatest coffin makers in America she was shown at last a chaste yet massive design that suited her. It was of sheet bronze sides, huge solid bronze castings on the corners, an inner silver casket, glass topped and hermetically sealed, and the whole outer shell covered an inch thick with silver.

The price was tens of thousands of dollars, but she did not mind.

Then, after the design had been selected, the Princess drew from around her neck a jewel, on which was a small model of the crown of Portugal.

"I want to have a great oblong metal box fitted on one end of the coffin, and I want this made in solid silver to rest upon it," she said. "But it is important that the crown be of a certain size. The dimensions that I will give you for the inside measurements of the crown must be followed with an absolute accuracy."

To the astonished officials of the company the Princess then proceeded to read from a notebook the exact measurements of her dead husband's head which she had made more than a year ago in the room where the body had lain.

"I want the crown made so that it would exactly fit the head of my husband if he were alive," she said.

The casket-making company called in one of the best silversmiths of New York. To him the Princess repeated her instructions. Then the order for the casket was sent to the factory at Boyertown, Pennsylvania. In due time the silver crown, a masterpiece of its kind, was shipped to the little Pennsylvania city. Princess de Braganza had been living there in retirement in the meantime, superintending the construction of the coffin. She spent all her days at the factory. When the crown reached there the work had progressed far enough for her to place it on the partly finished half ton of silver and bronze for the purpose of seeing how it looked.

**The American Princess of Braganza and Duchess of Oporto (Mrs. Nevada Van Valkenburg,)**

**Coffin and the Crown Resting Upon the Silver Pillow Which Mrs. Van Valkenburg Had Made.**

It seems rather squat and unimpressive! she said, as she stood off at a short distance and gazed at the effect. A consultation with officials and technical experts followed. This resulted in an order for a great silver stand on which to place the crown. This stand was made in the shape of a pillow. At a distance, it

seems to be made of some soft, velvety material. As a matter of fact, it is a real triumph of the silversmith's art. The top of the pillow-like stand was then cut with a circular indentation, into which the bottom of the crown fits snugly. If the occasion should arise the crown itself may be lifted out instantly. When this was done the former Mrs. Van Valkenburg expressed her admiration and satisfaction of the result.

For a time she was reticent as to her plans for the use of coffin and crown. But

little by little in her orders it was revealed that it was her intention to keep the body on display in the royal crypt at Lisbon. But there is still much to be done before it can take its place there where the face of the Prince of Braganza may be looked upon by the curious and the reverent indefinitely.

The casket is so arranged that the upper half may be lifted. The inner silver casket is covered with heavy glass hermetically sealed. But the Princess was more than doubtful about the skill of the

*"In that chamber of death a strange scene was enacted. While a secretary took down the notes the weeping princess measured for a royal crown the dead brow whose owner in life had always longed for this glittering bauble."*

This process, in fact, acts like an artificial heart, and even in the case of the aged, where the hardening of the arteries has progressed to the limit and the circulatory passageways are extremely small and even flattened, expert embalmers can bring about complete circulation of this embalming fluid. But perhaps the most amazing part of this achievement is that it has resulted, in effect, in the rediscovery of the art of the ancient Egyptians, whose mummification methods have never been equaled.

The Princess found that even if the embalming of her husband had been very hastily and badly done, this method could be used for two years after death, provided, of course, that decomposition had not progressed too far.

At the time of her husband's death, she said, she was unable to find in Italy anyone capable of assuring permanent preservation. She had watched the body carefully on her return from her casket-hunting expedition, and up to the time she had left Rome it had retained much of its life-like appearance. This was particularly so of his face. It was his face, she said, that she was more than anything else anxious to retain. She was going to have a death-mask made in order that his likeness might be preserved for the people of his native land for all times, but if money and science could do it she wanted the face under the glass of the casket to be as it was when he had lived here!

When the massive coffin was finished the Princess went to the most extreme pains and expense to guard it. Its total weight, as has been told, is more than half a ton. The huge packing case in which it is placed was of steel. A special train, heavily guarded, carried it to New York, where a whole compartment had been reserved for it in the Italian Line steamer Taormina. When the Taormina sailed the Princess was the only one on board who had a key to this room.

It is likely that American embalmers are already on their way to Italy to take the body of the Prince—dead now for a year and a half—and proceed with their work of weird rejuvenating and preservation. When that is done the casket will be placed on a Portuguese battleship and be taken to Lisbon in state. There it will be placed in the huge mausoleum side by side with that sarcophagus which holds the shattered remains of the late King Carlos, father of Manuel, and the Prince of Braganza's brother.

How much it cost Mrs. Van Valkenburg to overcome the republican prejudices of Portugal to bring about this entirely un-republican funeral is not known.

But there the husband who gave her her title will lie among his ancestors. The crown that would accurately fit his head, should some miracle happen and he be restored to life, will be ready for him to reach out his hand and grasp.



Italian embalmers who fixed her husband's body. It appeared that he had hardening of the arteries, and that in such a case a special operation is necessary to force the embalming fluid through the veins to produce perfect preservation for an indefinite period. While in the United States she learned that the embalming science had progressed here to the point where, even long after death, veins and arteries in the body may be raised and the circulation restored by mechanical means, strong preservatives being used in the place of blood.



**The Royal Mausoleum at Lisbon, where the Royal Dead Lie in State. Beneath It Is the Half Ton Silver and Bronze**